

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMCONSUL KARACHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8822

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: BHUTTO TOURS BALUCHISTAN

1. SUMMARY. IN A WEEK-LONG TOUR OF BALUCHISTAN APRIL 28-MAY 4 -- HIS FIRST SINCE LAST OCTOBER -- PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO CONCENTRATED ON THREE MATTERS: BOLSTERING OF PROVINCIAL STRENGTH OF RULING PEOPLE'S PARTY AT EXPENSE OF LOCAL NAP; PUBLICIZING PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, ESPECIALLY THAT PART PERFORMED BY MILITARY CIVIC ACTION; AND BUILDING UP MORALE OF ARMED FORCES GARRISONED IN INSURGENCY-PRONE AREAS. THERE WAS A WELCOME ABSENCE OF THE KIND OF BELLOCOSE STATEMENTS AGAINST PAKISTAN'S NEIGHBORS THAT MARKED BHUTTO'S PREVIOUS PUBLIC SPEECHES IN THIS BORDER PROVINCE AND IN HIS RECENT TOURS OF THE PUNJAB. THE OVERALL IMPRESSION CONVEYED BY THE RATHER LOW-KEY PUBLICITY OF THIS TOUR WAS AN UPBEAT ONE OF PEACE AND PROGRESS, WITH LAST YEAR'S INSURGENCY A THING OF THE PAST AND THE AGE-OLD PATTERN OF TRIBAL LOYALTIES CHANGING TO A SYSTEM MORE COMPATIBLE WITH NATIONAL INTEGRATION. END SUMMARY.

2. BHUTTO'S TOUR STARTED IN QUETTA, CONTINUED TO

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KALAT (TWO DAYS), THENCE TO THE MARRI HILLS FOR A WHIRLWIND TOUR

OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON 1 MAY. REMAINDER OF WEEK WAS SPENT IN A REST STOP AT THE HILL STATION OF ZIARAT, A VISIT TO PISHIN DISTRICT (RECENTLY SHEARED OFF FROM QUETTA DISTRICT) AND A FINAL ROUNDUP MEETING AT QUETTA BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE PROVINCE ON 4 MAY. IN THE ENTIRE WEEK PRIME MINISTER MADE ONLY TWO PUBLICIZED SPEECHES, BOTH TO TROOPS -- ONE IN THE MARRI HILLS AND ONE IN QUETTA. CONSIDERABLE CARE WAS TAKEN TO STRESS THE ABSENCE OF INSURGENT ACTION, POSSIBLY TO UNDERCUT FAIRLY WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT THE INSURGENCY, ANNOUNCED AS ENDED LAST OCTOBER, WOULD AGAIN BREAK OUT WITH THE SPRING THAWS. IN THIS CONTEXT THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF SURRENDER OF SMALL NUMBER OF DISSIDENT TRIBESMEN IN KALAT ON APRIL 29 IS AMBIGUOUS AND COULD BE VIEWED EITHER AS A FURTHER WINDING DOWN OF INSURGENT ACTIVITIES OR AS EVIDENCE THAT THE INSURGENCY IS NOT YET ALTOGETHER OVER. IT WAS POSSIBLY IN THE INTERESTS OF REINFORCING AN IMAGE OF PEACE AND QUIET THAT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SUCCESSFULLY SUPPRESSED NEWS OF THE FATAL SHOOTING ON 29 APRIL BY UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS OF A BRITISH TOURIST MOTORING WITH HIS FAMILY ON THE REMOTE DERA GHAZI KHAN-LORALAI ROAD.

3. THE PRESENCE THROUGHOUT THE TOUR OF PPP SECRETARY GENERAL MUBASHIR HASAN underscored one of the major purposes of the trip, namely the bolstering of PPP strength in the province. The outstanding success in this respect was the announcement on 29 April in Kalat of the switch to the PPP of NAP MPA SHER ALI KHAN NOWSHERWANI, bringing actual PPP strength in the 21-member provincial assembly to 11. Adherence to PPP of a few minor tribal sardars from both Jhalawan and Marri areas was also announced. News of lengthy meetings between Bhutto and two other NAP MPAs -- the Governor's brother "Prince" Abdul Karim and PA Speaker Barozai -- sparked speculation of further major shifts, but these did not materialize. Bhutto also held talks with Pakhtoonkhwa NAP leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai in the latter's home territory of Pishin in an apparent attempt to regain Achakzai's support for the provincial government which had been eroded by his opposition to the creation of the new Pishin district.

4. THE STRESS ON DEVELOPMENT WAS SIGNALIZED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TOUR BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN KALAT ON 28 APRIL OF ADDITIONAL RS. 6 CRORES (\$6 MILLION) OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE CURRENT YEAR'S PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET, RAISING THE TOTAL TO RS. 27 CRORES (\$27 MILLION). IT WAS FURTHER DRAMATIZED BY THE DAY-LONG VISIT ON 1 MAY TO FIVE OR SIX LOCALITIES IN THE HEART OF THE MARRI HILLS, WHERE BHUTTO INAUGURATED TWO PROJECTS BUILT UNDER MILITARY CIVIC ACTION PROGRAMS: A NEWLY-COMPLETED 65-MILE SECTION OF THE MUCH-ADVERTISED SIBI TO KOHLU ROAD; AND A "PEOPLE'S COLONY" OF 1,500 DWELLINGS AT KOHLU, HEADQUARTERS OF THE MARRI-BUGTI TRIBAL AGENCY. IN STATEMENTS AT THESE CEREMONIES,

BHUTTO REITERATED HIS OLD THEME THAT THE SARDARS OPPOSED SUCH BENEFITS FOR THE TRIBES OUT OF FEAR THAT THEY WOULD WEAKEN TRIBAL LOYALTIES, BUT THAT THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT WAS, THROUGH THESE MEANS, SUCCESSFULLY GAINING THE LOYALTIES OF THE TRIBALS AND FOSTERING THEIR WILLING ADHERANCE TO THE LARGER ENTITY OF PAKISTAN.

5. BHUTTO'S ONLY TWO MAJOR SPEECHES DURING THE TOUR WERE TO THE TROOPS -- ONE AT CHAKAR TANGI ON THE NEW ROAD IN THE MARRI HILLS ON 1 MAY, AND THE OTHER AT THE QUETTA MILITARY HEADQUARTERS ON 3 MAY. ON BOTH OCCASIONS, HE SOUGHT TO BOLSTER THE PRIDE OF THE MILITARY IN ITS ACHIEVEMENTS, UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, IN RESTORING PEACEFUL CONDITIONS IN THE PROVINCE AND IN CONTRIBUTING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THERE. ON THESE OCCASIONS, THE ABSENCE OF ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE JOB WAS NEARING COMPLETION SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT THE CENTRAL MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE PROVINCE WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD.

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6. BHUTTO'S ONLY REFERENCE TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES WERE CONTAINED IN HIS 1 MAY SPEECH TO THE TROOPS IN THE MARRI AREA. HE NOTED THAT HIS OVERALL POLICY WAS TO MAKE AS MANY FRIENDS ABROAD AS POSSIBLE

TO ENSURE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DOMESTIC REFORMS. REFERRING TO INDIA, HE CONTRASTED PAKISTAN'S POLICY OF STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN MILITARY PREPAREDNESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH INDIA'S POLICY OF STRESSING MILITARY POWER "WHILE BULK OF INDIAN POPULATION STARVED." ONLY REFERENCE TO AFGHANISTAN WAS REGRET THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES REMAINED STRAINED IN SPITE OF PAKISTAN'S BEST EFFORTS. FOREIGN AFFAIRS ALSO INTRUDED FORTUITOUSLY INTO THE TRIP IN TERMS OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RECOGNITION OF THE PRG MADE FROM THE MARRI HILLS (ISLAMABAD 3958) AND IN A QUICK TRIP TO KALAT BY AN OMANI VICE MINISTER WHO HAPPENED TO BE IN THE COUNTRY ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT AND WAS SUMMONED BY BHUTTO.

7. COMMENT: WHAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM KARACHI PEOPLE FAMILAR WITH THE BALUCHISTAN SCENE -- EVEN THOSE OPPOSED TO BHUTTO'S POLICIES THERE -- SUGGESTS THAT THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF RELATIVE QUIET IN THE PROVINCE IS BY AND LARGE ACCURATE. THE DEFECTON OF AN NAP MPA
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TO THE PPP CONTINUES THE EXERCISE IN PARLIAMENTARY COSMETICS TO BUILD UP AN APPEARANCE OF PPP DOMINANCE WHICH WAS BEGUN WITH THE CAREFULLY MANAGED ELECTION IN FEBRUARY 1974 OF TAJ MOHAMMED JAMALI AS MNA TO REPLACE NAP LEADER K. B. MARRI AND CONTINUED WITH THE SHIFT TO THE PPP OF TWO QAYYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE MPA'S LAST JANUARY. WHILE CLAIMS OF THE SHIFTED LOYALTIES OF THE HILL TRIBESMEN MAY BE A BIT EXAGGERATED, AND WHILE THE SITUATION IN LAST YEAR'S OTHER MAJOR REGION OF INSURGENCY, JHALAWAN, (WHICH BHUTTO DID NOT VISIT) MAY BE SOMEWHAT LESS PEACEFUL THAN IN THE MARRI HILLS, THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION THAT THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN THE PROVINCE HAS IMPROVED GREATLY SINCE THE WORST DAYS OF 1974.

8. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MILITARY'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT MAY ALSO BE SOMEWHAT EXAGGERATED, SINCE THE MARRI HILLS ROAD PROJECT IS A MAJOR REFURBISHING OF A DETERIORATED ROAD FROM BRITISH DAYS RATHER THAN A COMPLETELY NEW PROJECT; FURTHERMORE A QUESTION MIGHT BE RAISED ABOUT HOW MANY ACTUAL BALUCH TRIBESMEN (AS OPPOSED TO SETTLERS ENGAGED IN TRADE AND ADMINISTRATION) WOULD AGREE TO LIVE IN AN URBAN-TYPE SETTLEMENT SUCH AS THE ONE BUILT AT KOHLU.

9. THE ABSENCE OF INVECTIVE AGAINST AFGHANISTAN ON THIS OCCASION IS ENCOURAGING, AND MAY BE EXPLAINED IN PART BY THE ALMOST CURRENT VISIT OF AFGHANISTAN PRESIDENT DAOUD TO TEHRAN, WHERE THE SHAH MAY WELL HAVE BEEN STRESSING THE DESIRABILITY OF AN AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN ACCOMMODATION.
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